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SIMPLE THINGS

THE trouble about Toc H is that it is literally "too simple for words". That is why so many words have been expended upon it and so often in vain. Here are some more words, maybe to no better purpose. However inarticulate we may be, we go on cheerfully trying to reach the head with what can only begin at the heart.

Every member of Toc H, even the most experienced, knows that sinking feeling which grips him at the moment when, perhaps in company hitherto convivial, someone asks him "What is Toc H?" and half the table hangs on his answer. He stumbles into a tale of Flanders, now as remote to his younger hearers as Agincourt, on to "a queer sort of club, you know", to Scouts and Lepers; he may even get so far as Christianity. And then someone says "Please pass the potatoes", and the subject changes. If he is a wise man and sure of the Branch behind him, his best answer will be brief—"Come and see. We meet on Tuesdays at half past seven over Bunn's the baker's".

Heterodynes, acetphenetidin, or oligocene are handy words that can all be explained to the moderately intelligent in a paragraph of a text-book on radio, pharmacy or geology. The trouble begins with words so simple that they only require one syllable—work and play, strife and peace, love and hate, fear and faith, hope and trust, life and death, man and God. With these elemental ideas, to be experienced rather than described, to be learned and lived, cherished or resisted, Toc H is concerned in the end. Through all the outward inconsequences of its life, its organisation which sometimes creaks, its harmless trivialities or downright failures, it touches these simple things again and again in the simplest terms and reaches down to make quite sure that it stands upon the Rock where it was first planted.

This may seem too large a claim, too pompously put, to some reader who has met Toc H casually or found the little unit of it in his street rather a disunited or stagnant set of men. Like every movement—like the Church itself where it is not-so militant—Toc H at any given time has enough weak spots, and they are its worst advertisement. The best is usually less blatant, for truly humble men gain ground by inches, asking no notice or praise, content to change men and things round them until one fine day “something has happened” which neither they nor others can quite explain. This is an everyday miracle to which Toc H is well accustomed.

The body of Toc H, young and small as it still is among ‘national’ movements, can be set down on paper; the bare bones of it are so traced briefly on another page. Its origins are a matter of history, its constitution is printed in a legal document, its organisation is to be seen at work; anyone can attend its meetings and join in its simple ceremonies. These are but the dress, occasionally a little fantastical, which clothes its spirit. Any writer on social fashions can describe this dress, and some have been quite uncomplimentary about it. The trouble begins when one tries to catch a spirit in a net of words—for it comes and goes like the wind, blowing “where it listeth”. Felt but not seen, it fills all the house.

Two Things

The commonest short answer to the question “What is Toc H?” is that “It stands for two things—Fellowship and Service”. The first German to join Toc H, between the two wars, when confronted with this definition ‘came over philosophical’, as Germans will, and commented, “Funny you should say that—when Fellowship and Service are only *one* thing.” There he struck the truth which Toc H holds but which many a member needs time to learn. At the risk of being tiresomely trite, let us take the “two things” separately and see them become “one thing” in Toc H practice, as they do everywhere else where they are genuine.

Fellowship Through —

One Thing: A handful of men, caked with mud, ‘stand to’ in a trench a few miles east of Ypres, facing the watery dawn.

At a signal they crawl over into the water-logged wilderness in front of them and move steadily forward, within hail of one another. The dead landscape wakes into flame and hideous noise. The handful drops out of sight at moments into wet shell-holes, emerges and advances. No one notices when one man moves across a few yards to ease a dying friend, is hit himself in the act and both are left behind. When nightfall comes only half the handful remains to 'stand down' together in some mud-hole for a few hours, if they may. Tomorrow will come soon, but it will be the same as today, the same as uncounted yesterdays. Time barely exists for these men creeping up the Ridge of Passchendaele in 1917, where 100,000 have already died. There is no room for anything save what the debased English of today calls 'first priorities'. Chief among these are their skill at the game, their remembrances of home, the minimum of daily bread for their bodies and their rifles, and their comradeship with one another—all simple things: life is simple so near death. Not least of these simplicities is comradeship. Sleeping, they rest in it; waking, they rely upon it as the spring of action. It covers everything human in this inhuman place; at every hour, as some are aware and some are not, it keeps its kinship with the Divine.

— in Toc H —

Ten miles behind these men's backs lies a place where they were together a few weeks since and may, please God, some day meet again. Poperinghe, a little Flanders market town, spells for them 'rest' in the true as well as the military sense. And the heart of Poperinghe is Talbot House, where rest does not mean vacant idleness but active comradeship among all men and, if the men so will, with God himself. Here the idea of Toc H was born, not fortuitously or by any calculation but out of the sheer necessities of the time and place. The cradle of the fellowship, then, was a battlefield whose casualties (254,000 dead in a six mile radius of mud) have never been approached by half anywhere in the Second World War or its toils rivalled save in episodes like Arnhem, the Arctic Convoy or the Burmese jungle. The fellowship of which Toc H today is the heir was welded, not dissolved, by a furnace thrice heated.

The remnant of the handful at last came home at the Armistice and set out to advance across the wilderness of civilian life. Often when two of them met and began, as old soldiers will, to exchange reminiscences of the old times and notes on the new, they shared a vague discontent. Something grand, because it was so simple, was missing. In the complications of so-called 'peace-time', comradeship, bred by the stark simplicities of battle, seemed to be seeping away. They were in no mood for vain repining; they began to gather a fellowship round them, first the old lads who understood both their past experience and their present trouble, and then the young who were to receive this great gift and pass it on. Thus, almost imperceptibly, the earliest Toc H groups formed themselves in the post-war years and swelled into a movement which no one had sat down to plan.

When, therefore, a new reader visits (as we hope he will) a Toc H Branch in good going order, he should have no ground for surprise at the company he finds himself keeping. A solicitor, a schoolmaster or a policeman may be in the chair, a clerk or farm-labourer may give out notices, a Public School ex-officer may be taking orders from a 'Jobmaster' who sells him his socks. Two thirds of the meeting may be composed of miners or mill-hands or undergraduates, according to the place. the rest come from commerce and the professions; clerical collars will be there, round the necks of several denominations. And everyone, without the slightest sign of strain, seems to be 'Bill' or 'Tom' or 'Pop' to everybody else. The Red Flag will be countered in debate by True Blue, with all the heat of men who disagree as heartily as they trust each other. This is the give-and-take, at moments the rough-and-tumble, of true comradeship, which breeds an inward, not merely a polite. respect between men who differ and are friends. Our visitor needs but to make a single effort of imagination—to see all his hosts in dirty uniforms, their legs wrapped in old fashioned puttees, and the room transplanted to an Old House in Flanders. He will then recognise how this fellowship was founded and why it has, by its own nature, to live on and remain fruitful. For he will have caught a glimpse of the deep pit from which it was digged.

— to Service

A Second Thing: Active service was the only common bond of the handful advancing in the long-drawn agony up the wet slope of Flanders. At home they would not have lived in the same street or on the same scale of income; they would not have worked at the same bench or desk, played with each other's children on Saturday afternoons or sat in the same pew on Sundays; as boys they would not have attended the same school, and as old men never have spent afternoons together on the same bowling green. In short, without active service, which offered them no choice of the company they kept, they might never have met at all. This compulsion from outside of something far greater than themselves had driven them in upon one another. Once having found their places in the ranks, they groused their fill but made the very best of it. The dangerous game they were picked to play called for their combined effort. They trained their section of the vast team and were proud of the result. There is no need to say more: the rest is written in the history books and therefore liable to be forgotten.

When the survivors of the handful met again at home, in the name of Talbot House which many of them had known and loved, they looked no doubt like any other Old Comrades association, of which there were dozens at the time. They tasted the delight of swapping improbable soldiers' yarns; they might have continued to drink beer or tea together once a week, until the week became a month, the month an annual reunion for a year or two, and then—a memory. For the British mind tires quickly of philosophising about the past or about fellowship, it relapses into a vacuum where no life is. The British bent is instinctively towards action. "Let's get cracking" is the motto, and men start doing something, only stopping to reason why when they have to pause for breath.

So it was with the early groups of Toc H. They laid down no plan, they had no theory about procedure—they just proceeded. Men got busy on all sorts of small concerns side by side, and in order to 'make a job of it' found that they had to stick together. As if by accident they had rediscovered 'active service' as the true bond. They were on their way to find, within the limits of their small circle, a long-needed principle

which someone once termed "the moral equivalent for war"—that is, an outlet other than murder for the pioneer, the adventurer, even the brigand, which is in every full-blooded man.

Two Things are One Thing

'Twice one is One' is a queer bit of mathematics, but you can add Fellowship and Service together to make one Life. That is part, but not all, of what Toc H seeks to do in a man with a simplicity of method which some observers think childish: it may be none the worse for that. For it is a school of good citizenship which starts with the A.B.C.

Collect eleven men (or, if you prefer it, fifteen) who have a concern about football. They may discuss football, watch it played, bet on the pools, but they can never be a football team until you drop a football in their midst. It will not rest more than a second where you drop it before the men set it in violent motion. By strenuous practice a team—something new, that never till now existed—will grow up round it, something, may be, so alive and aggressive that it will win matches later on.

Collect eleven men—or fifteen, if you can—in a village or a suburb, not to talk overmuch about fellowship but to try it out in the service which lies everywhere at hand. Let them meet for a couple of hours one night a week to learn about the traditions, aims and ideas of the movement to which they belong, and to discuss how best they can apply them locally. On the other nights of the week let them go out, if possible in pairs or groups, to discover the half-forgotten blind or cripple and give him the fellowship of talk and a book or an airing, to dig some bedridden women's garden, to visit the sick, the lonely, the man or boy out of prison, to mow the church-yard, to teach the crafts they know to a troop of Scouts or give a hand in a Boys' Club. With such simple things, none of them quite easy or to be lightly undertaken, the young groups of Toc H exercises mind and hand. Harder tasks challenge the members as they proceed. There is a slum area which no one has had time to notice: public opinion of the townsfolk needs to be roused, a plan to be put forward. There is an election coming on, and the Council would be better for more men who have no axe to

grind. There is room in the Church, in Parliament, on the bench, in industry, in the Services for men who are sure they have a 'vocation' to serve their fellows. And there are the pressing problems of the nation and the wide world which demand that even plain citizens should have a mind and a voice about them; they must go to school in unfamiliar and intricate subjects—and that for many is harder than any manual labour.

The little group, almost casually collected, grows into a close fellowship by dint of its continuous efforts to serve whom and where it can. And the service gets done because it is sustained by the fellowship: it is team-work and not the responsibility of a lone hand, wrestling with discouragement. "Service or Fellowship—which do we tackle first?", is a question the infant group often asks its elders in Toc H. The answer is clearly "Both", for Fellowship and Service are inextricably One Thing. The only living Church is the missionary Church; its congregations which count, not merely in heads but in the community, are those which work because they worship and have the full right to worship because they work.

Does it matter?

Is this all too simple to be worth saying, or even too simple to be true? Judging by the number of men who confess that they have been attracted to Toc H by the naturalness of its mixture and the directness of its call to work, it may be accounted true. Judging by the freedom with which they admit that these things, once they have thus found them, are self-evident and worthwhile, it is worth saying. Toc H, indeed, has only one trick up its sleeve—to bring together men who would normally never have met or might even have shunned each other, and to set them working on tasks they never intended to do. The result is often unexpected and delightful, both to the victim and the onlooker.

What does this amount to? Is it but a sort of playing-at-Indians by grown men, or has it a deeper import? Were it no more than getting together and working together in a wholesome, self-forgetful spirit, it would count for something, but if you could multiply that on the widest scale among the

men and nations of the earth it would have incalculable effects. Supposing only that such a spirit were to pervade the industry of this country or to infect UNO (as it never did the League of Nations), should we be facing crisis at home at this moment, with more to come, or should we, looking out upon a whole world in upheaval be still wrapped in fears we scarcely dare to name? We have an immeasurable way to go before the pattern so normal in a tiny Toc H unit can reproduce itself in the whole community of our own people, of Europe or of the world. Dismiss the idea as Utopian, if you like, but at least be grateful that the pattern is there.

The Pattern

The pattern is there—but where did it come from? Without the answer it gives to that question Toc H counts half its story untold and all its labour vain.

In Talbot House at Poperinghe there was no uncertainty about the Pattern or where it was best to be seen. That was in the loft at the top, the Upper Room, where a well-worn carpenter's bench did duty as the altar, the work-bench of the Carpenter of Nazareth. The soldiers of the Salient were invited, but never constrained, to climb so high, and thousands who did so had no more doubts what was the design of the House, the ground on which were woven the bright threads of faith and courage and gaiety so discernible in every room downstairs. It was the pattern of a Life all Fellowship and Service, perfect towards God and man alike. Whatever hard words, too often true, these men used about Christ's Church, however unthinkingly they blasphemed His name, scarcely one was ever known to despise His life, in which the love, long-suffering and fortitude shamed his own.

This certainty of a Divine Mastery over all its concerns was the open secret of Talbot House. It remains the simplest fact of all about Toc H. In the face of every short-coming, its members still hold it true. Let it slip, and the best of them would see Toc H sunk to the level of a pleasant club to which they would not bother to belong.

A Christian Family

From very early days Toc H has preferred to call itself, not

a society, but a *family*. It uses thus the simplest word, the name of the most familiar fellowship of those who serve one another and their neighbours. And from its opening night in 1915 the family of serving men in Talbot House had set out to be Christian, certain of the Fatherhood of God and the love of innumerable brethren. When the House closed its doors at last in Flanders and was re-born as a movement at home, this conviction did not fade. The earliest declaration made by its members (it has been known ever since as the 'Main Resolution', see p. 101) opens with these words:

"Remembering with gratitude how God used the Old House to bring home to multitudes of men that behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the eternal realities, and to send them forth strengthened to fight at all costs for the setting up of His Kingdom upon earth, we pledge ourselves to strive . . ."

The words which follow, anyone would say, set an impossible 'target', well worth the best man's striving.

Again, the Toc H Prayer (see page 110), which every member knows by heart, opens:

"O God, who hast so wonderfully made Toc H, and set men in it to see their duty as Thy Will . . ."

and ends with the petition that—

"with gallant and high-hearted happiness we may work for Thy Kingdom in the wills of men".

The emphasis on the *wills* and not merely the hearts of men is quite deliberate. Behind it is the conviction—too simple for many in the modern world—that God has a purpose for men and that all the resolution and the venturesome spirit that is in a man should be bent to its fulfilment. This is not a religion of folded hands but of pressing on to a mark that is set. It provides no safe retreat from storms, but work to be done, a life to be lived in the world of everyday and to infect the lives of other men. As its first Administrator once said, "Toc H is not so much a Christian as a christianising society".

In Days of Doubt

Some readers may be feeling that in these many words about so simple a thing there has been too much appeal to the past. That appeal is only justified because Toc H has never shifted its essential ground with the years, however often it has moved

into new fields or discarded outmoded details. We are dealing not with a closed chapter of history, but with a tradition that goes on bearing fruit, a faith which has been maintained and renewed. Happy if we can dare to say that the past and the present are one and to believe that "the best is yet to be"!

But we all stand now in a decisive hour; we are like men "upon whom the ends of the earth are come". How best can the little family of ToC H bring whatever faith it has to bear upon the enormous problems of today and tomorrow? For the burden of mankind has never been heavier. Millions live on the edge of existence and see no hope ahead; China is deep in disintegration; India faces a like possibility; Palestine and Greece are irreconcilably divided, all Europe encamped under the flags of the rival ideologies of East and West. While America is bemused with money, some see our own country hung in the balance of bankruptcy. There is enough tinder for any thoughtless or unprincipled adventurer to start a blaze. And at the very moment when the world is off its balance a new chapter of the human story is ushered in by the impact of a giant force which we do not yet understand and are in no condition to use aright—the discovery of Atomic Energy, the most momentous since Prometheus stole fire from heaven.

Faced with these great facts anyone may be tempted to say at once that as an individual or a member of a small movement he can do nothing but live his own life as best he may and let the world go by. Only if he holds the Christian faith he cannot say that. For then he believes that God rules in spite of all, that the world is His and will be used, through all that may happen, by His Power to serve His Purpose.

That puts a new complexion on the present duty of every son of God. The good member of ToC H will tell himself clearly now that he dare not be less than one man, and the unit of ten members that it ought to be twelve or twenty as soon as it can win reinforcement. There is work to be done on the spot, in the home, the factory, the ship, the battalion, the church, the council chamber. If brotherhood is broken between nations and races, its mending starts in our street. If anti-social action brings misery and despair to thousands of homes somewhere in the world, all the more reason why we should give up Saturday

afternoon to serve a neighbour. Drops in the ocean? When all is said, the ocean is made of drops. Is this so simple as to be merely absurd? Or is it a test of faith that a man should do what he can, working outward in his own community as far as his arm will reach? Faithful in a few things, he may yet become ruler of many. Toc H has only grown, where it has grown well, by personal contacts, and done its best work by spreading gradually "the infection of a good courage".

Finding Freedom

Here at once Toc H is found playing its game upon the side unpopular and derided by many. For this is a time when faith is out of fashion, when man vaunts his scientific self-sufficiency and a moment afterwards doubts whether he is sufficient for the next puzzle which confronts him. The slogans of the Crusaders of other ages sound very faint and far off. Men no longer swear roundly "By the Splendour of God!" but despairingly by the atomic bomb. They are ready to pin whatever faith they have to things not at all simple, such as "dialectical materialism" (a long name for one-syllable Marx) and "a planned economy". These things are means, possible and workable means, for men to live together, but are they all for which their unquiet hearts crave? Is there ultimately no bigger, better end to claim the service of their wills?

Looking into some of the harrassed faces that pass us in the street or into our own hearts, which of us doubts that men crave for more than new forms of organisation in order to make life good to live? Planning is, no doubt, overdue and must urgently be done. It may mitigate some present hardships and some future fears, but it has no magic to fulfil our heart's deep desire. In so-called 'ages of faith', even in our grandfathers' time, men knew where to leave their burden and where to seek for guidance, though they did not always follow it. Quite simply—and often a little too glibly—they spoke of their goal as 'the Kingdom of Heaven'.

The modern world, on the whole, rejects this recipe as too old-fashioned, but every now and again you come face to face with a man whose whole bearing convinces you that he has found it to work. For you are made conscious that he has

found the Kingdom of Heaven, exactly where it was once promised—within himself. His presence brings into any room just the stability, the clear sight and a quality of joy for which the modern world is looking so distractedly. You feel that he is a free man.

The Christian Church, always a minority movement in a world which gives it lip-service, indifference or hostility, still preaches this Kingdom and those who listen still find their freedom there. Of the early steps in this discovery no simpler example can be seen than a group of ordinary men who have really 'found' themselves in Toc H. There is little self-consciousness about them, no grim piety. They go about their job with an air compounded of purpose and humour which their own prayer attempts to sum up as "high-hearted happiness". The best of them give proof, in the simplest way, of an old saying that "they that do the Will shall know of the Doctrine".

There is nothing new in our present discontent. In other terms and times it has all happened before. And there need be no despair in it for anyone who believes that "man's extremity is God's opportunity". In other such periods of doubt and distress, when things deemed secure have broken up under men's feet and they see nothing but illusory lights in the surrounding darkness, the Church of Christ has held her best record. Danger calls her to the heights. It is only the easy times that plunge her into mere respectability and allow her to neglect her mission of changing the lives of men at every cost. Toc H, a small platoon indeed in the Church's ranks, has often recalled with pride Chesterton's dictum that its job is "to change chaps". Now, then, is the time to use all the simple, humorous, honest means with which Toc H can go fishing for men in God's name and for His service.

One condition is inescapable. Toc H, the movement and each man in it, must be certain of the ground on which it stands, the old ground, the simple fact of a Rock from which it will not retreat. It has to abide a question from its Master, asked at another moment when faith was failing round about, and to return Peter's answer, the simplest and truest he knew :

"Jesus said 'Would ye also go away?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life'."

BARCLAY BARON.

MARKSMEN

Toc H was born in a House in Flanders, and when it took shape at home after the First World War it was natural that it should first be embodied in a House. This its members, accustomed to Army terms, named 'Toc H Mark I.' Other Marks, numbered in succession, followed: there are at present 17 in England and 4 overseas. Here a Marksman looks at his home from inside.

"Teach us to live together" (from the Toc H PRAYER)

THE Warden was speaking: "This is the room you'll be in for the time being. We call it the Nursery. The chap in the bed next to yours is a Pole, the one in this bed a West African studying textiles, over there a tubby chap in the Bank and in the corner Jimmy, a 'printer's devil'. I expect you'd like to unpack and settle in. Oh! if you hear someone yell 'Grub up!' you'll know that its nine o'clock and there is some cocoa ready down below. We take it in turns to get this each night ourselves. Are you alright for a towel? Good, see you later."

I started to unpack. Tomorrow was the first day at my new job. Travelling up to L— I had been wondering what sort of a place a Toc H Mark is, or, for that matter, what is Toc H? Anyway, I was jolly glad to be put up for a week to give me time to look around for 'digs'. I picked up my towel. Over the bed next to mine hung the photograph of a young soldier—a Lt. Col. at twenty-five and a V.C.! The room in which I stood was dedicated to the memory of this young man who had given all he had so that his comrades might live decently and at peace. I wondered if he had . . . A lusty yell from downstairs brought me back to earth and I dashed off to the bathroom and there collided with a wet shape which proved to be Jimmy, just back from a session at the boys club where he takes 'gym'.

Such was my introduction to one of the small chain of houses known as Toc H Marks. It was also my introduction to Toc H.

The House

In every city and large town there are a great number of folk constantly on the move, with no roots in the place or much time to make new friends; a large proportion of these are young men. Every Toc H Mark nowadays has a daily stream of them asking for accommodation. The few Marks we have can only touch the fringe of the housing shortage and help just the few.

But a Mark is not another name for a boarding-house. It is not out solely to provide comfortable quarters for the men fortunate enough to live there, nor to cater for a floating population. Some of those who live there are commended to it by a Toc H Branch in the place from which they have come, some by their firms (for the wish of firms to 'place' a man, particularly a junior, is increasing), and others are just looking for 'digs'. Many come in who are not members, but if they stay—and the Mark is doing its job—most of them will ask to join.

A Toc H Mark is usually a fairly large house, simply but well furnished, and able to accommodate some twenty-five residents, with a few beds always available for visitors and guests who may be staying for one night or a week or two. There is a lounge, a dining room and a quiet room—a necessity for those studying for exams., and always a chapel.

Some of these houses have been bought by Toc H as Marks, and others given to the movement, wholly or in part, as a memorial to a son, a father or comrades. And most rooms in a Mark are known by a name. The example of a man or a group of men is commemorated by a room dedicated to someone's memory. What more living memorial can be devised than that which provides the means whereby young men of diverse talents, thought, class and income can come together to experience friendship and learn the art of corporate everyday Christian living? For, all said and done, that is the Mark's main purpose.

The Men

'The Family' is the keynote, and many a newcomer is surprised to find how well the code of private family life does work out in this larger body. The family living in a Mark, therefore, needs to be a carefully chosen mixed team—the young apprentice, the student, the shop assistant, the mechanic or the miner, the bank official and the journalist, in age from sixteen upwards.

From among the family one is appointed to be Honorary Warden and he is head of the house. There is a resident house-keeper and a domestic staff. Another resident will take over the duties of House Secretary and collect the weekly payments of his fellow Marksmen. What each contributes to the Family Purse is largely a matter of his earnings and what he can afford. No difference whatever is made with regard to food or rooms; each

receives the same whatever he pays. Each Mark tries to be self-supporting and the average is maintained by this principle, not of charity from richer to poorer, but of a true family spirit.

As this is but an overgrown family, it is a small enough community for each to realise duties and responsibilities to his fellow member which in the larger community of town or nation are too often forgotten. A true family would not wish anyone to arrive unwelcomed, so each member in turn takes upon himself the duties of host for the evening. This may well mean answering telephone or door-bell, entertaining guests or visitors, helping an enquirer, serving the rest of the family with supper and washing up, possibly stoking and locking the back door last thing. It is astonishing to a newcomer to find how much is normally left by one half of the community to be done by the other and taken for granted!

The same idea applies to the various jobs of service performed outside by each Marksman according to his bent and his ability. There is no press-gang to enforce this service, but always there is the challenge to the needs of neighbours—be it to Scouting or Boys' Club work, to cripple-pushing or blood donation. Many a man has come to a Mark just seeking somewhere to live or a bed for a night, and has gone away months or years later having been caught in the swim of voluntary service.

He has shared a room and his thoughts with a mechanic, a lawyer or a shop assistant for the first time. He has gleaned much in discussion of what others think and of what this world's great needs are. Through all the fun and fellowship of the family life he has learned that the greatest shortage today is that of men willing to live in the everyday world as Christians. The evidences in the house itself bear witness to this aim. There is in every Mark a Chapel, used for family prayers—taken by members in turn, at night and for weekday Celebrations of Holy Communion. Some Marks are fortunate enough to have a resident Padre, who is friend and adviser of all on board; others have local clergy and ministers 'attached'. In this close community he will have discovered that it is not easy all the time for men so different to live together, but that it is splendidly possible when they have practiced the art as a family of men learning together the Christian way.

T.F.G.



Tubby, the Founder Padre, bestows its Lamp of Maintenance on a new Branch at Houslow

PETER DISCOVERS TOC H

What is an ordinary Toc H meeting like? PETER's talk with JOHN DURHAM records at least one man's experience.

"Quite frankly", said Peter, "I hadn't the faintest intention of going".

We were sitting over coffee in the Restaurant Car of one of the refrigerator trains designed to produce a hardy race. I had last seen Peter when he had been brought in as a casualty in April 1945 to the hospital in Brussels where I was serving as a Padre; and it had been kindly chance and a waiter that had put us together at the same table. Fortunately we were travelling alone, for we spent the meal talking in a succession of "Do you remember?"—the most delightful method of conversation for those who do, and infuriatingly boring for those who don't.

It was not until the arrival of the coffee that I asked him what he was doing.

"Oh", said Peter, "I'm back at the old job. There's nothing much to it, but it's all right. Quite a decent crowd of fellows. But I just can't raise much enthusiasm over careering about the country trying to sell cement. What are you doing? Still mucking about with bad lads from the Police Courts?"

"Well, not exactly"—and I laughed—"I'm on the staff of Toc H. Joined it after I was demobbed. Ever come across it? I mean outside the Forces?"

"This really is odd. As a matter of fact I did come across it a few weeks ago. I'm living now in Sherston. Do you know it?"

"Never been there in my life. What's it like?"

"Oh, like most of your smaller industrial towns. Nothing much to write home about architecturally. A fair shopping centre, and a fair whack of slums. But so far we haven't got much unemployment, thank heavens. Trade generally seems pretty brisk up there".

"What about the people?"

"Well, I like them. They're a very friendly lot. Extremely outspoken, but then you know where you are with them. A bit inclined to judge a man on his bank balance, I'd say; but I'm not sure how deep that really goes. I'm inclined to think they've

got a greater—what do you call it?—civic sense, than you get in your big towns”.

“You mean they’re more of a community?”

“I wouldn’t like to swear to that, but I think they’ve got more chance of developing that kind of life”.

“I think you’re probably right. Of course, that’s one of the problems that Toc H . . . but how did you come across us?”

“Quite frankly, John, I hadn’t the faintest intention of going. It happened like this. My wife was away for the night with her mother, so I suggested to one of the fellows in the office that we might go to the flicks. He said he couldn’t manage it as he had a meeting—I gathered it had got something to do with Toc H—and invited me to go along with him. You know what a weak-minded devil I am, and I hadn’t the courage to refuse.

“What made you go, then?”

“I was properly sunk, John. I’d had supper and was sitting in front of the fire when he turned up to fetch me. Couldn’t do anything else but go”.

“Where did they meet?”

“In a room just off the High Street. Very easy really to find. And when you got there, there was a sign on the door, and all the dope about times of meeting and that sort of thing. Quite a nice room, too; clean and tidy, and all that, and no six months old notices hanging about the place. Gave me the impression that they really bothered about it”.

“How many were there?”

“Oh, about twenty I should think—a frightfully mixed bag. I recognised some of them. There was one of the local Bank managers, a policeman, one of the porters from the railway station and the butcher we deal with. I thought it an extraordinary mixture”.

“Well, at any rate, that’s on the right lines. You know, in the early days we used to be called ‘human zoo’. It’s easy enough, Peter, to keep together a gang of people who are all thinking the same way because they’ve been educated on the same lines and come from the same sort of financial background. But I’m not sure its worth doing. Did they strike you as being a friendly crowd?”

"Oh, lor' yes. Most friendly and hospitable. To tell you the truth I was a bit afraid they might be that hearty kind which completely puts me off; but they seemed just honestly friendly, and glad to see one".

"Was it a special kind of 'do'? I mean, were there a lot of guests?"

"I don't think there were any except myself. At any rate I was the only one introduced by the Chairman; and as far as I could tell it was just an ordinary meeting. I thought it was a good idea to start the thing off by having tea and buns going round—especially if there were visitors; makes it easier to talk and all that".

"Was there a speaker from outside or what did you do? I suppose you began a bit late".

"Speaking from bitter experience, John? As a matter of fact we did, but not very. There was a speaker whom everybody called Tom; and I gathered that he'd got some kind of official position in the Branch, because the Chairman said something about it being the Pilot's innings—I think it was—that evening".

"Yes, that's right. You see, a Branch has a team of people elected to help lead it in the way it should go, and one of them is the Pilot. He's the man who interprets Toc H to the new-comer, and who's got to keep his fingers on the pulse of the Branch. It was a sort of stock-taking night, then?"

"Yes, I think that about fits it. But we didn't get down to that until a quarter to nine because they were initiating one of the chaps into membership, and that took up a bit of time".

"How did the Initiation Ceremony appeal to you, Peter?"

"As a matter of fact it did, John; and that surprised me a bit, because so often that sort of thing—with the lights out, the Lamp lit, the questions and answers—seems to become emotional and sentimental. But, to be honest, I couldn't find a trace of that in it. It obviously meant something to the people there. I don't remember all of it, but the bit about Service stuck in my mind—where the chap's asked "What is Service?" and replies, "The rent we pay for our room on earth". I thought that just about delivered the goods.* But I wasn't happy with the way the meeting began".

* See a comment by Lord Halifax on this phrase on p. 105.

"How do you mean?"

"Well, the lighting of the Lamp, the reciting of those lovely lines of Laurence Binyon's—I've remembered them ever since I first read them years ago—

'They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them,'"

and the answer by everybody, 'We will remember them', and then a minute's silence; well, isn't this weekly remembrance of people who're dead a bit morbid?"

"I think it probably would be, Peter, if it stopped there; but it doesn't. You've forgotten that after the minute's silence the man taking Light says 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works', and everybody replies, 'And glorify our Father which is in heaven'. Surely that isn't morbid looking into the past? It's to do with the present and the future. It's true we're remembering the Elder Brethren, but then we aren't hinking of them as being dead. What we're really doing is to emember with thanksgiving the folk who've done a grand job of work—all of them, whether they were well known or not. They're the people who have made it possible for us to have the things we value, both in and out of Toc H. By remembering them we remind ourselves of what we've got to do. Sorry, Peter, I've been preaching a sermon".

"You haven't really, and anyhow it's linked it all up with what the Pilot talked about. I don't of course, remember exactly what he said but I think what he was getting at was that the Branch ought to ask itself whether it was delivering the goods as well as it did in the early days. He didn't wrap it up either".

"He provoked discussion, did he?"

"You're telling me! I've never heard so many straight things said so amiably. It was really awfully funny, because there was a little bloke who got terribly worked-up, and the more excited he got the more everybody laughed, until he began to laugh himself. They'd been arguing the toss whether they could take on the job of organising what he called 'Baby Watching'. Apparently he'd got the idea that there were a lot of young married couples with kids who could never go out together in

the evening because the kids couldn't be left, and that Toc H ought to take the lead in organising a rota of people who'd every so often look after the house and kids. Well, everybody thought it was a very good idea, but some of them said they'd got enough on their plate already—what with acting as medical orderlies at the Hospital over the week-end, running a Boys Club, looking after wireless sets for the bed-ridden, and a few other jobs I don't remember. This was the point where the little chap went off the deep end”.

“What did they decide after all?”

“Oh, he had his way. In fact Gwen and I have found ourselves caught up in the racket; and believe it or not, John, every blooming Friday evening off we go to mind a couple of babies. *Me!* I ask you! What are you grinning at?”

“Only that they seem to have made a bit of an impression on you, Peter. There's nothing, you know, like having a good Job-master in the Branch. What time did you pack up?”

“Oh, we had Prayers at ten, and I was indoors about half-past. Walked home with the Padre”.

This time I only grinned to myself. Though Peter and I had become good friends in the Army he'd always fought shy of my breed. Best not remind him of the fact. Anyhow he'd be seeing a lot more of the Padre, because it was obvious that he was going to see a lot more of Toc H.

JOHN DURHAM.

THE MAIN RESOLUTION

A 'Main Resolution', so-called ever since, was passed by the conference held at the first Birthday Festival in December, 1922, in London; it was confirmed by the Central Council at its first meeting in the following year, and is still valid. It runs:—

“Remembering with gratitude how God used the Old House to bring home to multitudes of men that behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the eternal realities, and to send them forth strengthened to fight at all costs for the setting up of His Kingdom upon earth; we pledge ourselves to strive—to listen now and always for the voice of God; to know His will revealed in Christ and to do it fearlessly, reckoning nothing of the world's opinion or its successes for ourselves or this our family; and towards this end—

TO THINK FAIRLY,

TO LOVE WIDELY,

TO WITNESS HUMBLY,

TO BUILD BRAVELY.



A Toe H Volunteer superintends the dressing of a Leper

'CLEANSE THE LEPER'

IN 1935, Tubby, while on a visit to Toc H units in West Africa, came face to face with leprosy. He saw at once an opportunity to help and on his return offered what Toc H possessed—not money but men—to the British Empire Relief Association (BELRA). Out of many volunteers, the first five members were sent as lay workers to the Leper field. After a short training at home, they went out on a small allowance and on a five years' contract. Today eighteen Toc H volunteers are in the field with BELRA, eight others have been transferred to Government leprosy work and new volunteers, some of them members returned from the Services, are offering themselves; some workers have been on duty more than ten years.

These laymen working alongside the doctors and nursing sisters, are now accounted an essential part of the staff of leper colonies. For in a Settlement there is a great deal of non-medical work which a layman can do—building, carpentry, sanitation, farming, gardening, office work, education, rehabilitation and social welfare of all kinds. These men do not regret the life they have chosen. They are sustained in it by the work and prayers of many members and units of Toc H at home.

Defeating Leprosy

It is still news to many people that leprosy can be cured, or at least that those suffering from it can often, after prolonged treatment, be discharged as 'symptom-free'. Hope first came when scientists, especially Sir Leonard Rogers and Dr. Ernest Muir, discovered new ways of administering Chaulmoogra Oil, a specific long known to natives. In 1934, Sir Leonard Rogers and Sir Frank Carter, a great philanthropist, founded BELRA to help missionary societies dealing with lepers to make use of Chaulmoogra derivatives and to encourage the Government to take more vigorous interest in the welfare of the lepers, at least 2,000,000, in the British Commonwealth.

The size and urgency of this problem can only be indicated here. In the Owerri Province of Southern Nigeria alone, for instance, it is estimated that there are 70,000 lepers. As the maximum number for any Settlement is 1,000 patients, it would require 70 Settlements, each with its own staff of doctors, nurses

and lay workers, to deal with this completely. In 1939, with the co-operation of District Officers, clan chiefs and councils, BELRA, therefore, made its first experiment with a Leprosy Clinic to which patients could come, and Leper Villages where they could live during treatment. The success of this led to its extension to other districts: today there are 54 Clinics and 33 leper villages, with 23,700 patients under treatment. In all this the Toc H lay workers bear their own share.

The Work's Reward

The worker's reward is more work and, at intervals, such a scene as is pictured by Miss Manchee, a member of Toc H (Women's Section) and Deputation Secretary of BELRA, who has just come home from a six months' tour of the African Settlements:

"The full moon, like an enormous lantern, hung high in the heavens, dimming the stars; the palm trees were silhouetted against the cloudless sky. The scent of tuberose, the chirrup of crickets and croaking of frogs filled the air. The day's work was done and the doctors and their wives, the nursing sister, the lay workers and their visitor, tired by an exacting day, were enjoying the serenity of a tropical evening.

What was that? The sound of throbbing drums came up from the Leper Settlement. It was the 'Celebration' call. It called the patients to dance and sing—and how Africans dance and sing when there is anything to celebrate! "But," said the visitor, "what can lepers have to rejoice about?" He had in mind some of the things he had seen that day—crippled hands with no fingers and feet with no toes, staring bloodshot or blind eyes, bodies covered with patches which were anaesthetic, faces repulsive with nodules and thickened skin, gaping ulcers that displayed softened bones, legs and arms that ached so much that patients could not stand or work, and bodies in hospital swollen with fever.

But tonight's celebrations were justified. Earlier that day, a doctor explained, he had been able to tell fifty-five patients that they were now free from leprosy and could go home in a few days' time . . .

The moon was low in the heavens when the drumming ceased. The workers felt happy that night and their hearts rejoiced with the people in the Settlement. We thought about Elizabeth, whose baby had been taken away from her when it was born. (It had not been born a leper—no baby ever is—but left with an infectious mother, it would soon have got the disease). Elizabeth had been one of the dancers that night; her baby had been handed back to her. We thought of John; who had come into the Settlement as a boy; he is now cured and training as a doctor, hoping to return to the Settlement one day as one of its Medical Officers. We thought of Isaac, who also came to the Settlement as a child; he is now training as a Methodist minister. We thought of the 1,230 others who had returned from here to their own

villages to start life all over again and to pass on some of the knowledge they had acquired in the Settlement of a better way of living.

We could indeed rejoice. But then we thought of all those patients who had had to be turned away from the Settlement because there was no room and who could have no treatment because there was no Clinic or Leper Village in their district. One of the Toc H workers said "If BELRA subscribers at home knew that we turned away patients, they would give up subscribing." "No," said the visitor, "if they knew they would give all the more—in kind or in service."

NOTE.—*The General Secretary of BELRA is A. C. Edgar (late of Toc H Headquarters staff) and the address is 167, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1 (Vic. 5740).*

'THE RENT WE PAY'

IN the brief Initiation of a Toc H member (see page 99) the Lamp is put into his hand and he is asked "What first lit it?", to which he replies "Unselfish sacrifice?" A further question follows, "What alone will maintain it?"; he answers "Unselfish service". The last question then is, "What is Service?", and he answers (in a phrase attributed to Miss Beale, the famous Headmistress of Cheltenham), "*The rent we pay for our room on earth.*"

LORD HALIFAX, a President of Toc H, who, when he was Viceroy of India, chose to be initiated as an ordinary member of the Delhi-Simla Branch, has commented thus on this definition of service:

"These are words which are used by Toc H at their meetings. From the first time I heard them, they made a profound impression on me. We have been too much inclined to let our thoughts rest upon what we judge to be our rights, without giving equal weight to the recognition of our duties. But in these words the balance is set right and the claim is made on every one of us to serve our fellows.

There is no room in the modern world for easy indifference to the world's needs: we are all our 'brother's keeper'. Only by translating this truth into terms of daily life can we hope to establish true understanding between men and nations—and make the world more worthy of all the sacrifice that twice in a generation has been spent to save it."

TOC H ON ACTIVE SERVICE



Tubby, the Lord Mayor of London, the Hon. D. S. Campbell (Chairman of Toc H) and General Sir William Slim

The Birthday of Toc H falls on December 11. In 1946 the celebrations in London included a crowded meeting at the Mansion House, where over 100 Mayors of cities and towns, as far afield as Newcastle and Penzance, were among the Lord Mayor's guests. The chief speakers were General Sir WILLIAM SLIM, late Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces in South-East Asia, P. H. B. LYON, Headmaster of Rugby and Chairman of the Toc H Youth Service Committee, and the Rt. Hon. HENRY WILLINCK, M.P., formerly Chairman of Toc H. General SLIM spoke as follows:—

I AM very glad to have this opportunity before an audience such as this, which represents so much vigour and drive in our national life, to tell you something of what Toc H did for us in South-East Asia.

Now the Fourteenth Army found itself treading paths wilder and more lonely, perhaps, than those of other Armies. We fought not only a resolute and brutal enemy, but we fought those equal dangers and more insidious enemies, strangeness and distance. Everything around us was strange, the country, the jungle, the climate, the people—even the bugs that bit us were strange, and when we measured the distance from home in thousands of miles it seemed a long, long way. But it was not only the miles that oppressed us; it was the feeling that we sometimes had that we were rather out of the minds of the people

Elephant Point,
on the Bay of
Bengal, where
first "Toc" II
came forward
and devised a
system of having
rest-centres with-
in twenty miles
of the battle-
line" (p. 109)



at home. We did not blame you for that. You, especially here in London, had the enemy on your doorstep, or over your roof; you had greater things than us to think of, but to some of the men in the jungle, six thousand miles from home, it was a bit lonely. We had to overcome those things, and my men, British, Indian and African, did overcome them and they overcame them themselves. They overcame them by their comradeship and by their stout hearts and by their faith in their country.

We did not get a great deal of help. Again, I am not complaining. We were at the bottom of the list, we came lowest in the order of priority, and it was right that we should. If there were any tanks going or any guns, or modern equipment or landing-craft, it was right that they should go to those who were fighting in Europe, because we had to win the war there first—but sometimes we did feel a little left out of it.

To start with, to help us to fight these things we had to rely on the extremely meagre resources that we had at hand, and I shall never forget the debt that I owe, first to the British people in India and to the Indian people, who came forward in 1942 and early 1943 to help us. We really were very hard up. I had a ration strength in my Army of seven hundred and fifty thousand men. They were not all soldiers, I am afraid, but they were all men and they all had to be looked after. To cater for them I had ten mobile cinemas of which never more than eight



MOBILE T.O.C. H. CLUB in Burma—"Right in the jungle, just behind the fighting line, they set up their Club." (p. 109).

functioned at once, and that was in a land where there are no cinemas: I mention that just to show you the scale on which we had to work. I always felt that while I would accept, much as I hated it, the fact that we came last for tanks, guns, ammunition,

equipment, ships and everything else, I never really reconciled myself (indeed I fought very hard against it) that we always came last on the list for medical comforts and for amenities, because I thought we needed them as badly as anybody else. That is why, when T.O.C. H., thanks to the generosity of the public, received more support and was able to stretch out into South-East Asia, we welcomed them so heartily. The more we got to know them the more we liked them, because there was something about T.O.C. H. that appealed tremendously to every kind of man we had in the Army. They understood our wants very much better than a lot of people.

There were plenty of kind people, you know, who were very willing to help soldiers, sailors and airmen, but they always seemed to have some extraordinary idea which I never understood that if you were going to help a soldier you had somehow to lower your level—to get down to *his* level. Well, believe me, the average level of my soldiers was a long way above that of people of that sort! T.O.C. H. never felt that. T.O.C. H. appealed to all that was good and best in a man, and they catered for our wants. They understood what we wanted—they had done it before.

For instance, our great trouble was shortage of men and great distances. I could not call my men out and send them back five or six hundred miles to rest and get recreation; it took too

long. I had not enough men to replace them, and I had two Divisions that were in the front line, in actual contact with the enemy, for eighteen months without a stop: that has never, I think, been done anywhere else. It was quite impossible to pull



MOBILE TOC H CLUB in action—"a few light tables and camp chairs—but they made all the difference to the men."

those men out and give them a fortnight's rest, because it would have taken a month to get them there and the Lord knows how long to get back, but Toc H came forward and devised a system of having Rest-centres within twenty miles of the battle line. That enabled us to send small parties of men, one hundred or so at a time, quickly back and let them have a week or ten days, or even three days, in an atmosphere of some civilisation, where they could regain touch with the things that meant so much to them, and then get them back again. It was astounding what a number of men we worked through.

Another thing Toc H did was to produce a Mobile Club. This Mobile Club was a small organisation packed, usually, into about three three-ton lorries and staffed by very able men, which followed the Division. Whenever they got an opportunity, right in the jungle, just behind the fighting line—in amongst it—they set up their Club. Some of you perhaps would not think very much of those Clubs if you saw them: a few light camp tables and camp chairs, books, magazines, a gramophone—but they made all the difference to the men who went to them. It was somewhere where they could snatch a day out of the battle, a day out of all the grimness and beastliness and dirt of this kind of fighting we had with an animal enemy in the jungle, and that was a tremendous service.

However, Toc H catered for more than that. It catered for much more than the bodily comfort of the man. Our struggle was to keep up morale. We kept it up, I think: anyway, the Japs thought so. Morale is a spiritual quality, it is an attitude of mind, something inside the man. When a man went to one of these Toc H places he got, as far as one could in those places, the comforts and the rest that his body demanded, but he got something else: he got a reinforcement of his spiritual faith, of the thing that held him together—and, mind you, it is only the spiritual forces that hold men together in the conditions under which we lived and fought. In fact it is only the spiritual forces which hold *any* individual man together, and he found those at Toc H. I do not mean that religion was rammed down his throat. He did not have to go to prayer meetings and so on if he did not want to, but they were there and if he wanted them he could avail himself of them—and most men did avail themselves of them. Even those who were not so formal in their requirements of spiritual support and enrichment, unconsciously imbibed it from the very atmosphere of the place. That was one of the great things we got from Toc H.

There were a good many things in the Services which, in spite of all their faults, it would be an advantage to carry on into civil life: I speak as a man who has lived outside the Army and in it. Some of the best of those things are in Toc H, and that is why I am so grateful for this opportunity to urge you to see, as far as you can, in the widely-scattered areas which you represent in this country of ours, that those things are carried on. If this country is true to its own spiritual values, just as there was nothing that we could not do in war so there is nothing that we cannot do, that is worth doing, in peace.

THE TOC H PRAYER

This Prayer was adopted in the early days of Toc H at home and is known by heart by every member:

“O God, who hast so wonderfully made Toc H and set men in it to see their duty as Thy will, teach us to live together in love and joy and peace; to check all bitterness; to disown discouragement; to practise thanksgiving, and to leap with joy to any task for others. Strengthen the good thing thus begun, that with gallant and high-hearted happiness we may work for Thy Kingdom in the wills of men. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

ROUND AND ABOUT TOC H

TO record the life and work of Toc H at any given moment in detail would require a stout volume. Moreover such a record, while having to repeat many thoughts, experiences, meetings and jobs which bear a family likeness all over the world, would even then miss the living essentials—the liveliness and laughter and the feeling of purpose which mark the Toc H spirit at work but which elude words. All we can do here is to pick up, almost at random, a little handful of Areas at home and print brief dispatches from them. These are no more remarkable than the rest but must stand duty for all—and that means twenty-six Areas, each with many units, at home; and overseas six Areas in Australia, one in New Zealand, three in Canada, two in India, five in Southern Africa, besides the units scattered in West Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Ceylon, the Far East and in four Republics of South America. A very brief summary of the work of the Areas overseas will be found in the Annual Report at the end of this number.

Scotland, a Nation

First, a dispatch from the Regional Secretary in Scotland, recently returned to his old work after serving as Toc Commissioner with the Central Mediterranean Forces:

The strength of a national sense among Scots is well known. Less appreciated is the fact that this consciousness of unity and of common destiny itself derives from the interplay, within a small compass, of greatly differing and contrasting types of character. A Borderer is as distinctive as a Highlander, but no more so than men from the Lothians or Fife, Ayrshire or Aberdeen, Lanarkshire or Caithness; yet each and all of them are unmistakably Scots. They are influenced by rich local traditions, experience and sturdy independence of thought, and all knit by a great national heritage in the fields of religion, education and love of freedom.

Toc H in Scotland reflects this. Its units are deep-rooted in the communities in which they exist, but have an outlook far removed from parochialism. The distances separating many units and making contact difficult was accentuated by poor war-time communications, but the re-unifying of Toc H in Scotland

in 1946 was made straightforward, both by an undiminished consciousness of vigour and purpose continuing in small groups, and by the thinking and planning done during the war by a team representative of the movement throughout the country.

Toc H finances gave the members an early opportunity to clarify and define the measure of their responsibility toward the whole movement. In February, the Scottish Executive sponsored a brief series of discussions on Christian responsibility in the rightful use of money, and on the importance of this being reflected in the standard of members' contributions to a family purse. A greatly increased income was clearly needed if the movement were to attempt the work to which it believed it had been called by God. The response had to be worked out by the units and members themselves: by the end of the financial year in October it had come in convincing fashion. Out of forty active units, thirty-nine had made voluntary contributions totalling £700, all from the direct giving of their own members. Compared to the previous year, this more than doubled the total contributions and the proportion of contributing units. Later indications show that, far from being a flash in the pan, considerable further increase is to be expected. A greater income from Scotland will be needed than the members alone can give, but such a standard of giving by them justifies the support of interested friends. Altogether it augurs well for the energy and ability which Toc H Scotland can put into its work in the community.

A Scottish Festival in October made kinship an experienced reality, and sent members back to their units with a deepened sense of purpose and a fuller understanding of the value which the movement can have for men today. That value will be effective as more men come into Toc H itself, and as an increasing number of units exemplify the worth and practicability of Christian principles more widely and deeply among the community.

Both of these make evident the necessity for considerable and sound extension, and there is encouragement in the early progress. Ten new groups have come into being, some in places where Toc H never existed previously; several others have had their

initial meetings early in 1947; and in some twenty or thirty other towns there are live and interested contacts around whom new units can grow.

The opportunity is great. Recent experience shows very clearly that while men are probably more wary than ever of things which they regard as 'institutions', they are sensitive and responsive to a personal approach. This is particularly noticeable with recently returned service men and chaplains. They show a prompt appreciation and a desire to try a movement which lays stress upon the vital value of strong personal Christian relationships, and which promises to give to men both the freedom and responsibility to work out their interpretations in terms of their own experience.

ANGUS JOHNSTON.

A 'Ministry of Works' in East Anglia

Next, take an Area in England where communications are also not easy. This dispatch comes from the Area Secretary, now home again after running, with his wife, a Toc H Services Club in Alexandria.

Clearing the Way: As many will recall, on the morning after a raid on their town everything looked completely hopeless and it seemed that every building in a particular street had been destroyed. Once, however, the work of clearance of the debris had been completed, the sight was certainly a little less depressing and the situation was found not to be quite as bad as had appeared. Then with the sympathy of friends, and the help of A.R.P. personnel and others, the spirit of the inhabitants rose again to face the future. Taking over an area in England early in 1946 seemed to present me with something similar, without, of course, the horrors of war. Unit and District life had been greatly disorganised during the past six years and many members hardly knew where they stood or where they should proceed. What a privilege it was to try and become an 'encourager' of these people! For that is one of the jobs of the Area Staff.

It is said that "you can't keep a good man down" and naturally one soon found there were many in this category among the membership who were willing to wield the spade to help clear the path ahead. Once men can see the horizon the majority of them will try to move towards it, and the job was to convince some that there was a path ahead for Toc H and that Toc H itself was one of the recipes for the world's re-building.

The District Team: First, then, in East Anglia there were months of spade work to be done clearing up the "debris" of the years the locusts had eaten in order to find out on what ground we stood. It was vital to get the 'essential services' going and in this instance it seemed that these were the District Teams. Six were formed, or re-formed, and set in operation within a few months, though one or two were actually in existence at the time*

District Teams, once established, helped tremendously to link up lonely units and in some parts of the Area it was amazing how units who thought they were already dead found instead that there was still a lot of life in the old dog! Others took longer to decide which side of Jordan they were on.

Perhaps the next stage which helped everyone to get encouragement was the holding of District Rallies in a number of places. In every case these Rallies produced many more people than the leaders thought existed in and around Toc H. A great deal is due to the encouraging speakers at these meetings for the e-birth of the movement in this Area, for they warmed our hearts and stiffened our wills.

If you want to try out your powers of patience come to East Anglia and try to get from one place to another. You may succeed; if so, try getting back the same day. All this hasn't helped in inter-visiting between units, in arranging training sessions and the regular attendance at District and other meetings; in spite of it all things have happened and people have certainly arrived at these gatherings, even if they never got home. The creation of the Norfolk Division during the year has made a great difference in this respect, for it is better to work efficiently in two halves than indifferently as a whole.

Getting Known: 'Publicity' is a word we have used a lot this past year, for, although if one of us became engaged he would immediately want to tell the world of his good news, with the good news of Toc H we have tended to leave it to the other man

* The District Team is one of the most useful pieces of Toc H machinery. It consists of elected representatives of all the units in a fairly compact District, meeting regularly to compare notes, to resolve difficulties, to encourage each other and to plan extension and foresee the way ahead.

—the local public—to find out. Gradually the idea is getting round that the whereabouts of the Branch quarters should be given much more publicity by notices in strategic spots.

One thing that has amazed us (though I don't know why it should) is the interest in Toc H of a wide circle of people dwelling around us. Often the principle has been that Mr. So-and-so shouldn't be approached for "How do we know he is interested?" The answer of course is "How do we know he is *not* interested?", and a number of members have been surprised to find interest just where it was not expected. This had been very apparent in the enrolment of new Builders, talks to various Societies and Guilds, and last but not least among the Undergraduates at Cambridge, where fresh contact has been made with some and renewed with others who had learnt to know Toc H in every theatre of war overseas.

Extending the Work: A lot has been heard of finance and the National Appeal and the crisis in the state of the Family Purse. This crisis has shown members and friends a fresh opportunity to assist in the spread of the movement and many instances could be given of efforts made by the various units to swell the funds.

The works of a clock aren't much use without the main-spring, so mere organisation or money alone would never spread Toc H. Its main-spring or purpose must be in evidence and have a definite relationship to its methods. There is a real art in running meetings and in doing 'jobs' if they are to further that purpose: it has been noticeable that where the purpose is blurred, there the simple methods of Toc H are forgotten. Thus many training sessions have been spent in renewing our vision and using our methods to make that vision more a reality.

Yes, the debris has been cleared up and building operations have begun in new and old places and among every group of workmen I find those who believe in what they are building. There is a greater realisation that even the two halves in the Area together don't make up Toc H. It is far bigger than this, but, as I said at the beginning, to try to be an 'encourager' in this work helps one to face better the challenge of the Elder Brethren from whose failing hands the Torch has been passed to ours to bear high, if we can.

HOWARD DUNNETT.

Lights of London

Then take London, a monster conglomeration which in every connection provides its special problems. The Area Padre who writes this dispatch was captured in 1940, with four other members of the Toc H staff, while serving the men of the B.E.F. in Toc H Clubs in France. He continued active Toc H work in his prison camp, as did over 1,000 other members in prisoner of war groups in Germany, and others in the Japanese camps. That is another, and a gallant, story.

To write of Toc H in London is a difficult thing. The sheer weight of bricks and mortar, the endless lines of streets and houses are more than a little baffling. It is true that there are facts and figures. Something like 140 Branches are meeting regularly, attending District Teams and sending representatives to the four Area Executives. But that really means very little, for the story cannot be told in numbers. Twelve men, each of whom spend something like three hours travelling to and from work each day, meet of an evening in a small out-of-the-way hut and take to themselves the name of a Borough of over 200,000 people—that is true but leaves the greater part of the actual story untold.

London in War-time: To start at the beginning, London Toc H towards the end of the war had at its heart the Centre in Dean's Yard, Westminster. At that time travelling was very difficult and so, while such meetings as could were taking place, the main work was the gathering of information at the Centre. Slowly London Toc H found itself again and there appeared District Teams and one Regional Executive. The part the Centre played in the building up of Toc H life at that time was very great. Not only was it used by those members who got to it, but all kinds of folk from overseas and all parts of our own country found a welcome there.

Gradually it became possible to go out into London and meet the brave folk who were keeping things going. Typical of this time was the sending in of thirty capitation fees for absent members by three men, who for reasons of sickness and overwork found it very difficult to meet themselves. A tremendous amount of work was being done at Services Clubs and it is impossible to tell how many men passed through Toc H in that way. The Branches themselves were meeting under the difficulties of strict blackout and to the accompaniment of fly-bombs and the like.

The Centre at Work: The end of the war made it much easier in certain ways, and Branches were cheered by the slow return of old members. District Teams creaked into existence and shared the news and experience of the past years. Building was very gradual at that time, but the Regional Executive had gathered the whole of London into one and made possible the interchange of Branch news. The Toc H Centre removed from Dean's Yard to Greek Street and London Toc H enjoyed its first real gatherings: three inaugural Guest Nights held at the new Centre were attended by very many of the friends of Toc H.

This Centre at Greek Street was able to play a very large part in welcoming back so many of the prisoners of war who came from the Far East; in its rooms all kinds of meetings, attended by people of many nations, were held. From this time on the growth was slow but sure, and Toc H activities grew both in variety and strength. All over London Guest Nights were arranged. It was a great joy for many folk to meet friends they had not seen for years. Perhaps the three greatest problems were, and still are, manpower, service and finance. All three have been hammered at, times out of number and with no little success.

Occasions: Certain things perhaps stand out—a gathering at Grosvenor Chapel on Remembrance Sunday when 400 Toc H London voices sang hymns to six million wireless listeners. Then there was the World Chain of Light to celebrate the Birthday of Toc H in December, with 2,700 in the Abbey and a lesser number in Church House afterwards. The Service in the Abbey was most moving and for the first time all the banners of London were seen parading. We are now looking forward to the future with hope and the certainty that Toc H is already beginning to play a great part in the life of this City. AUSTEN WILLIAMS.

THE 'SET-UP' OF TOC H

Toc H is organised in *Branches*; a probationary stage of the Branch is called a *group*. These units are linked in *Districts*, which again form parts of a larger division, the *Area*. Areas, Districts and local units have their own officers and committees, and the whole movement is directed from a *Headquarters* in London, under an Administrator. The final governing body is a representative and elected *Central Council*, which meets annually; this appoints a *Central Executive Committee* which holds monthly meetings. There is a small whole time *Staff*, mostly paid, of padres and laymen, posted in the various Areas, some of them overseas.

YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

An attempt has been made in the foregoing articles to explain what Toc H is, what it believes and what it sets out to do. Here is a very brief summary of its past history and its future hopes.

World War No. I

The idea of Toc H was born in a club for men on active service. TALBOT HOUSE was opened on December 11, 1915, at Poperinghe, the nearest habitable town in Flanders to the Ypres battlefield. It was named after Lieut. Gilbert Talbot, Rifle Brigade, who was killed near Ypres on July 30, 1915. The initials of 'Talbot House', T.H., in the Army signaller's language of 1914-18, were pronounced 'Toc H', and this natural abbreviation has persisted.

Its founders were three Chaplains of the old 6th Division—PHILIP CLAYTON (universally known as 'TUBBY'), NEVILLE TALBOT (afterwards Bishop of Pretoria, then Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham: he died in 1943) and HAROLD R. BATES, who died in 1945.

Talbot House, run by Tubby until after the Armistice, was much more than the usual soldiers' club. It provided on the ground floor for the bodily needs of men with a canteen, opening on a garden; it offered quiet and food for the mind in writing rooms and library upstairs; and in the Upper Room, a large loft at the top, it met a man's spiritual needs in the most beautiful chapel on the Western Front—his was in truth the mainspring of the House's life.

In 1929 the late Lord Wakefield presented the 'Old House' at Poperinghe to Toc H and generously endowed it. It served for the next ten years as a place of regular weekend pilgrimage to thousands of members and was a source of inspiration to many. It survived invasion in 1940 intact. Its precious possessions were all hidden by the townsfolk, devoted friends of Toc H, and the whole House now stands ready again for use as soon as travel conditions allow.

2. Between the Wars

Early in 1920 Toc H was reborn, as a movement, in London and soon spread rapidly to other places.

In 1922 it was granted a *Royal Charter*, its first Hon. Administrator was appointed, its first Birthday Festival was held, at which its first *Lamps* (see p. 120) were lit. On the same day Tubby was inducted as Vicar of *All Hallows Barking-by-the-Tower*, an old church which became a shrine of Toc H and centre of its work; the church was almost destroyed by enemy action in 1940-41 but is to be rebuilt. In the same year a sister movement, the *Toc H League of Women Helpers*, now *Toc H (Women's Section)*, was founded. Also in 1922 Tubby carried Toc H overseas for the first time—to Canada.

In 1923 Toc H was founded in *South America* (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile) by W. J. Lake Lake, later Hon. Administrator of the movement.

In 1925 Tubby and Padre Pat Leonard (now Provost of Glasgow Cathedral) undertook a 'World Tour' to start Toc H in *Australia and New Zealand, Malaya, India and Ceylon*.

In 1926 the Rev. Harry Ellison spread Toc H widely in *South Africa and Rhodesia*.

These or later pioneers founded units of Toc H in Belgium, France and Germany, Malta and Gibraltar, Egypt and Palestine, East and West Africa, Burma, Straits Settlements, Hong Kong, China and Japan, and made some faithful friends in the United States.

At home, by the time war broke out again in 1939, there were some 1,500 units of Toc H and over twenty residential Houses ('Marks', see page 93).

3. World War No. 2

With the return of war in 1939 the peace-time organisation and some of the normal 'jobs' had to be modified, but so far as possible both were maintained. The young members were scattered on active service, their elders were busy on war-work or civil defence. At the same time a great new field of work for the men and women of all three fighting Services opened. Toc H at once pledged all its resources for this and went on to raise large fresh funds to extend it. During the war the movement founded, or took its share in, 300 Services Clubs at home, as well as in the Dominions, the Middle East, India, Burma and the Far East, Iceland, Germany and elsewhere. The first call was, of course, for canteen work, but the Toc H Clubs aimed at being more. They had the pattern of the original Talbot House in mind when they stood for active friendship to all and sundry, places where not only the usual recreations could be found, but comfort and quiet and food for the mind and spirit. They were not 'institutes' but had the touch of home. They attracted thus many Service men to seek eventual membership of Toc H and to look forward to their share in its tremendous tasks in peace-time.

Facing the Future

The War Services work of Toc H is rapidly nearing its close as troops are withdrawn from abroad—except in Germany where its work for the men of the B.A.O.R. has begun to spread into the difficult field of Anglo-German relations. The main energies of Toc H are now directed towards the immense and urgent needs of the changing post-war world. Its scattered 'families' of men, small in numbers but eager in spirit, are setting out to tackle the problems that face each community on the spot, so far as their powers allow them. They seek the support of their neighbours; they hope to enlist many more in their ranks. They need money for all this and are contributing a high proportion of the budget themselves, but they need much support from people of goodwill if they are to achieve their aims.

There are many such people of goodwill towards Toc H who, for various reasons, are unable to play an active part as members of it. They can enrol themselves, by subscribing to its funds, in the growing company of Toc H BUILDERS. They then receive this JOURNAL, monthly and are kept in touch with the life of the movement, locally and elsewhere, in various ways. They are, in fact, counted as a valued section of the 'Family'.

SYMBOLS AND CEREMONIES

The symbol of Toc H is the *Lamp of Maintenance*. Modelled on the design of a First Century Christian Lamp, it bears on its handle a double Cross, taken from the arms of the City of Ypres, which Toc H was given leave to wear by the Burgomaster after the first World War. Cast in bronze, a Lamp of Maintenance is bestowed upon every Branch so soon as it is recognised as having reached that status in the family. All these Lamps remain the property of the parent body and may be withdrawn from any Branch which does not maintain a fit standard of family life and work. A Silver Lamp is kept perpetually lighted in All Hallows Church in London, and from it most of the Branch Lamps in the world have been lit.



Lamp and Rush-light

A group, which is a preliminary stage to Branch status, holds a *Rushlight*, a bronze replica of an old English rushlight-holder, with the double Cross of Ypres on its handle. Both symbols are used in exactly the same way in two simple ceremonies, 'Light' and Initiation.

The *Ceremony of Light* is performed at some stage of every Toc H meeting everywhere. All present standing and all lights in the room being put out, the member appointed gives the word 'Light!' and kindles the Lamp or Rushlight. These words follow:

LEADER: *With proud thanksgiving let us remember our Elder Brethren.*

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

ALL: *We will remember them.*

One minute of Silence.

LEADER: *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works—*

ALL: *And glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

After a brief pause, the Lamp is extinguished and the lights in the room come on again. The double significance of this simple ceremony is plain. The light of good example, shown by our 'Elder Brethren' who have passed on, is continually upheld, and their successors continually pledge themselves to maintain it in their own lives.

(For Initiation see 'The Rent we Pay,' page 105).